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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography describes 52 current works of literature for children which have characters who inspire character development. The bibliography is divided into sections on: (1) Respect for the Self; (2) Respect for Others; (3) Respect for the Earth; (4) Responsibility; (5) Honesty; and (6) Caring. The bibliography concludes with a series of discussion questions about 12 different books. The questions come from the collaboration of children and adults who shared books in YMCAs across the country. (NKA)

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Book Characters Who Inspire Character Development: Models of Respect, Responsibility, Honesty And Caring in Current Children's Books

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April 24, 1998
by Susie Wilde

• = more recent books, maybe more difficult to find in library
***= sensitive subjects in story**

Professional Resource

Lewis, Barbara A., What Do You Stand For?: A Kid's Guide to Building Character (Free Spirit Press)
A guide to activities for twenty different character traits. Includes points for discussion, exercises, and stories that give examples of people who prove the traits.

Respect for the Self

Hoffman, Mary, Amazing Grace (Dial, Grades K-2)
Grace loves books and acting and wants to star in the class play of Peter Pan, but her classmates tell her she can't because she's black and she's a girl. Her loving grandmother helps her see she can do anything she wants if she sets her mind on it. The sequel, Boundless Grace (Dial, Grades 2-4) finds Grace thinking that her single parent, extended family's not real because she doesn't see it validated in the world around her.

Rathman, Peggy, Ruby the Copycat (Scholastic, Grades K-2)
Ruby's new in school and it becomes obvious fairly quickly (and humorously) that she's a copy cat. By the story's end, the teacher encourages Ruby to show her own gifts.

Walsh, Ellen Stoll, Hop Jump (HBJ, Grades preK- 1)
Betsy doesn't jump like other frogs, she loves to dance. When she finally proves to the other frogs that dancing is delightful and they want to ban a hopper, she stands up for

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Respect for Others

• Diakite, Baba, The Hunterman and the Crocodile (Scholastic, Grades 2-3)
Bamba, the hunterman, takes a crocodile family and despite promises, now they want to eat him. He appeals to animals to save him, but they're rebelling against the disrespect of man.

•Edwards, Pamela, Barefoot: Escape on the Underground Railroad (HarperCollins; Grades 3-5)
A young runaway slave is protected and sheltered by animals when he is chased by the Heavy Boots (owners). Story is told from animals point of view and leaves lots of room to wonder. Theme of mutual respect is strong in this book.

• Faulkner, Keith, The Long-Nosed Pig (Dial; Grades K-2)
This pop-up features a boasting long snouted pig who thinks himself better than others...until his snout in the air snobbery makes him run into a tree and he has a "short, wrinkly, pink snout".

Hayes, Joe, A Spoon for Every Bite (Orchard, Grades 4-5)
A young Mexican couple live next to a greedy man who shows them great disrespect because of their poorness. By the story's end he learns that wisdom and caring are greater wealths.

Henkes, Kevin, Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse (Greenwillow, Grades K-2)
Exuberant Lilly loves her teacher almost as much as she loves her new purse which jingles with coins. When her teacher asks her to wait her impatience gets her in trouble and then angry Lilly writes a note she's ashamed of. Her respectful teacher draws the same response from her and there's a lovely resolution.

Kurtz, Jane, Pulling the Lion's Tail (Simon and Schuster, Grades 3-5)
Almaz has been motherless for years and now her new stepmother is shy and quiet. Almaz leans a respectful patience when she cautiously pulls hairs from a lion's tail.

• Pfister, Marcus, Milo and the Magical Stones (North-South Books, Grades 1-4)
Milo finds magical stones and has to make a decision. Will he respect the other mice or will he be greedy? There are two endings to this book.

Rathman, Peggy, Officer Buckle and Gloria (Putnam,Grades K-2)
Officer Buckle tries to get kids to respect safety rules, but he's dull and ineffective until Gloria, the hamming police dog joins him. Only she begins to care more about pleasing children than her relationship with Officer Buckle.

San Souci, Robert, The Talking Eggs (Dial, Grades K-4)
When a young girl comes upon a strange and magical woman, she acts respectful and reaps rewards. Her spoiled sister's behavior is a different story!

•San Souci, Robert, A Weave of Words (Orchard; Grades 4-5)
A haughty prince wants to marry the beautiful weaver's daughter, but she demands he learn to respect learning and master a craft. Later it's these very undertakings which save his life from a three-headed monster.

Respect for the Earth

Asch, Frank and Vagin, Vladimir, The Flower Faerie (Scholastic, Grades 2-4)
An emperor's son appreciates the world around him, acknowledging this by painting things of wonder. When his greedy father catches him painting a faerie, he captures her, demands flowers to feed her and interrupting the cycle of nature, the world suffers until he changes his ways.

Cherry, Lynne, The Great Kapok Tree (HBJ, Grades 3-5)
When a man begins to chop at an ancient rainforest tree, its inhabitants speak up and tell the man how its loss will affect their world.

Van Allsburg, Chris, Just A Dream (Houghton Mifflin, Grades 3-5)
A boy unconscious of ways to respect the earth has a dream that changes his life forever.

Responsibility

Bunting, Eve, Summer Wheels (HBJ; Grades 4-5)
Based on a true character, a man who loans out bikes to children who take responsibility for them. This longer picture book will take more than one sitting, but has strong themes of respect, responsibility, and honesty.

Cooney, Barbara, Miss Rumphius (Viking, Grades 1-5)
A young girl tells her grandfather she wants to be like him, traveling and living by the sea. He asks her also to, "do something to make the world more beautiful". Finally she learns how she can do this and passes on the challenge to take responsibility to improve the world to her niece.

•Kimmel, Eric, Ten Suns: A Chinese Legend (Holiday House, Grades 3-5)
The tale tells how there were once ten suns, each of them the sons of an emperor, each responsible for lighting the sky in turn. When they irresponsibly decide to light the skies together, the emperor must take responsibility or the earth will burn up.

Kipling, Rudyard, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi (Morrow, Grades 3-5)
A long picture book adaptation (will take more than one reading) by Jerry Pinkney who can paint amazing snakes and knows how to write with suspense. Rikki is a mongoose who feels responsible for ridding the human's home and garden of two cobras.

Martin, Rafe, The Monkey Bridge (Knopf, Grades 3-5)
In this traditional Indian tale, a monkey's tribe is threatened by a greedy human king. When they clash, the monkey teaches the human that leadership means, not taking from your subjects, but taking responsibility for them.

•Russo, Marisabina, When Mama Gets Home (Greenwillow, Grades K-1)
A single-parent home is shown as a place of caring and warmth where everyone pitches in. Mama's devoted to her children, but they've spent the afternoon taking responsibility for making the house a happy place to return to.

San Souci, Robert, The Hired Hand (Dial, Grades 3-5)
Based on an oral African-American Tale, we meet Young Sam who will not take responsibility for either his work or his actions. When he tries to perform magic the lazy way, there are horrible consequences and he changes his ways. His dishonesty is also a strong theme in the story.

Schertle, Alice, Down the Road (Harcourt, Grades K-2)
Hetty goes to the store for the first time by herself to fetch the eggs for her parents. She's respectful to the store keeper and careful...until she reaches for a shiny apple and her basket tips and eggs break. Mama and Papa show a lot of caring in the face of her sadness.

Van Allsburg, Chris, The Wretched Stone (Houghton Mifflin, Grades 3-5)
Written as a ship's log, the story tells of sailors who bring aboard a huge glowing rock and then can't stop watching it, even to save the ship. A wonderful allegory for how television can eat away at responsible behavior.

Wisniewski, David, The Secret Knowledge of Grown-ups (Lothrop; Grades 3 and up)
A silly look at all the responsible rules adults tell children. You must eat your vegetables, for example, because once meat-eating vegetables ruled the earth and now you've got to eat vegetables to "keep the little horrors fearful and demoralized and to protect modern civilization."

Honesty

•Buehner, Caralyn, I Did It, I'm Sorry (Dial, Grades 3-5)
A series of vignettes where animals are in situations where honesty is called for. Models owning up to the truth. Silly multiple choices let children decide and then talk about whys.

Havill, Juanita, Jamica's Find (Houghton Mifflin, Grades K-2)
Jamaica finds a stuffed animal on the playground and she doesn't want to give it up, until finally her bad feelings about keeping it persuade her otherwise.

Kimmel, Eric, Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock (Holiday House, Grades K-2)
Anansi the spider tricks other animals out of their gathered foods until Little Bush Deer turns his own trick on him. Lots of repetition for young children.

Kurtz, Jane, Fire on the Mountain (Simon and Schuster, Grades 4-5)
A young innocent, honest boy is cheated by a greedy dishonest man. The servants of this man unite to teach this man a lesson with his own form of trickery.

Martin, Rafe, The Rough-face Girl (Putnam, 3-5th grade)
An Cinderella-like Algonquin Indian story about a scarred girl. Her sisters seek to marry "the Invisible Being" in the village, but their lies get them know where. Rough-face girl wins his love seeing honestly and clearly. Another excellent variation with a similar sibling dishonesty is John Steptoe's Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters.

*Polacco, Patricia, Chicken Sunday (Philomel Books, 1992)
A young girl and her beloved friends adore Miss Eula and want her to have an Easter hat. When they go to earn money from a shop owner, they're blamed for vandalism and must prove their integrity. (subtle images of the shop owner's holocaust background).

Scieszka, Jon, The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs (Viking, Grades K-5)
Here's the other side of the story from the wolf's point of view. A funny look at the traditional story can lead to a discussion of personal honesty.

•Shannon, David, A Bad Case of Stripes (Scholastic;Grades 3-5th)
Camilla Cream loves lima beans, but she won't eat them because she cares more about what others think than what she really wants. When she catches a bad case of stripes, she learns appearances aren't as important as honesty with herself.

Shannon, David, How Georgie Radbourn Saved Baseball (Scholastic, Grades 3-5)
The story takes place in a time when baseball's forbidden and therefore, spring can't come. When Georgie Radbourn, a natural, is born, he can't stop talking baseball and his honesty gets him into a great deal of trouble before his truthful courage triumphs.

* •Simms, Laura, The Bone Man (Hyperion, Grades 3-5)
Nulwee a Modoc Indian boy shows disrespect for the old ways and then lies, making the problem worse as a frightening bone man grows larger and more threatening. Truth and courage help Nulwee conquer the bone man in this retelling. I think illustrations are scary, but have only met one child who feels the same.

Soto, Gary, Too Many Tamales (Putnam, Grades K-3)
Maria ignores her mother's request not to play with her ring. She assumes she's lost it in making tamales and enlists the help of her cousins to eat twenty-four tamales rather than tell the truth.

Caring

Carle, Eric, The Very Lonely Firefly (Philomel, Grades K-1)
A lonely firefly is constantly attracted to lights, looking for others like him. By the surprise ending (where fireflies really light up), he's no longer lonely.

* Carmichael, Clay, Used-Up Bear (North-South Books, Grades K-2)
When Bear, who belongs to Clara, sees his fur being loved thin, he's worried about what will become of him. All the other animals build his fears, but Clara makes him a special red suit to protect him.

* Davol, Marguerite, The Paper Dragon (Atheneum, Grades 3-5)
A painter, who loves his village even more than his art, saves his community from a fiery dragon by accomplishing three difficult tasks.

Fox, Mem, Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge (Kane/Miller, Grades 3-5)
Wilfred Gordon, a small boy, has a special relationship with Miss Nancy, his elderly neighbor and his caring helps her failing memory.

Kasza, Keiko, The Wolf's Chicken Stew (Putnam, Grades K-1)
The Wolf is hungry for chicken stew and he delivers goodies to a hen to fatten her up. When he's ready to eat her, he discovers she has a whole brood of chicks who kiss him and see his as dear Uncle Wolf.

•Mills, Lauren, The Rag Coat (Little Brown, Grades 4-5th)
Minna desperately wants to go to school, but she has no coat to wear, her father's just died and she's poor. The community bands together to create a coat for her, "a whole lot of people make it warm." (Father dies in story)

*Norac, Carl, I Love You So Much (Doubleday, Grades K-2)
Lola the hamster wakes up with special words on her tongue and because of circumstance it takes almost a whole day for her to say them. By the book's end she's nearly bursting with her "I love you"!

Polacco, Patricia, Babushka Baba Yaga (Philomel, Grades 3-5)
Baba Yaga has lived in the forest her whole life and she longs to be a grandmother. She disguises herself as a grandmother and cares for little boy until tales about her threaten her relationship until the community members learn to see with their hearts.

•Polacco, Patricia, Pink and Say (Philomel, 4-5th grades)
A long picture book that would need at least two readings is about a young black boy that saves a white boy from a Civil War battle field. The story has much to say about caring for others and taking responsibility for them, no matter what color. (One of heroes dies at story's end, as does his mother).

Rosenberg, Liz, The Scrap Doll (HarperCollins, Grades K-2)
Lydia wants a doll, but her mother doesn't have much money, so she hands her down a scrap doll. Lydia hates it and calls it "Ugly Old Thing". But as she works to make it more beautiful, her caring increases, by the story's end she gives the now treasured doll a name.

Seeger, Pete, Abiyoyo (Macmillan, Grades K-2)
A ukelele-playing boy and his trickster father, not respected in their community, go live on the edge of town. Their caring and courage defeats a monster.

Steig, William, Sylvester and the Magic Pebble (Simon & Schuster, Grades K-3)
Sylvester and his parents care deeply about each other. When magic turns Sylvester into a rock, his parents never give up searching for him, or caring, until he's released from the spell.

Watson, Mary, The Butterfly Seeds (Tambourine, 3-5th grades)
A young immigrant boy is given "butterfly" seeds by his grandfather. But where can he plant him in his new urban environment. It takes the caring of other immigrants to help him bring his plants and new life into blossom.

Zolotow, Charlotte, Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present (HarperCollins, Grades K-1)
A little girl searches for the perfect present for her mother's birthday and she's helped by a caring rabbit.

YMCA Wondering Questions: Collected from Y's Across the Country for sharing with children

This collaboration comes from children and adults from Y's across the country who shared children's books and then wondered together. They were asked and shared in hopes that they will lead to more sharing, discussing, and fun.

Eric Carle, The Very Lonely Firefly

1. Why was the lonely firefly searching for fireflies?
2. What do you think makes the animals eyeballs shine?
3. Why didn't the firefly give up when he got frustrated trying to find other fireflies?
4. How did the firefly feel at the end when he found other fireflies?
5. How did the firefly feel when he saw all the fireworks?

Comments: beautiful book
-contributed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA Childcare Providers

and more questions

6. How does the book light up?
7. What did he do to get separated?
8. Did the fireflies at the end of the book accept him?
9. How did the firefly know he belonged?
10. How did the firefly feel?
11. Why didn't he get caught?
12. What did he eat?
13. How long was he alone?

-contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from Deer Valley YMCA; Charotte City; Freeport, IL/ Westchester

Pamela Edwards, Barefoot: Escape on the Underground

1. How do you think the animals help the slave?
2. Why is he called Barefoot?
3. Why is the boy running away?
4. Why does the story take place at night?
5. Do you think the boy thinks the animals are helping him? Why?

-contributed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA Childcare Providers

Keith Faulkner, The Long-nosed Pig

1. How long is a long nose?
2. Do you think the long-nosed pig smells things differently?
3. Do you think the nose was longer than an elephants?
4. What happened when he sneezed?
5. Do you think the animals liked the pig better with a shorter nose?
6. What happened to his nose while he slept?

-contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from Southwest YMCA, Maumee, Ohio; YMCA of Greater Kansas City, Longview Branch; YMCA of the Desert, Palm Desert, CA; A Jordan YMCA, Indianapolis, IN

Mem Fox, Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge

1. Why did the different people have such different views of what memory was?
2. Why did items in the box help Miss Nancy regain her memory?
3. Why did Wilfred spend all his time with elderly people and not play with children his own age?
4. Tell about a happy time you spent with someone who's older?
5. What did Wilfred and Miss Nancy share besides four names?

Comments: very cute book & illustrations

-contributed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA Childcare Providers

Rafe Martin, The Monkey Bridge

1. What would happen if the king didn't learn?
2. How can the monkey speak English?
3. What would have happened if the monkeys didn't create the bridge?
4. What would have happened if they monkey king was selfish?
5. What would have happened if they didn't catch the monkey king when he fell?
6. What changes do you think will happen in the human community?
7. What do you think the fruit tastes like?

- contributed by Y's in Sidney, Ohio; Midddletown, CT ; Dunmore, PA; Bridgeport, CT; Scottsdale, Arizona

Carl Norac, I Love You So Much

1. Why was Lola nervous after she said her special words?
2. How do you think Lola felt after she said her special words?
3. How do you think her Mommy and Daddy felt after she said her special words?
4. When is the right time to say your special words?
5. How do you think Lola felt when she couldn't' say her special words?

Comments: good illustrations, good message

-contributed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA Childcare Providers

and more questions for Carl Norac, I Love You So Much

6. Was this the first time Nora ever said these words?
7. Had Nora ever heard these special words before?
8. Did Nora have a crush on rat?
9. What do you think Nora's special words are the next day?
10. How did saying the words make her feelings change?
11. Why is it so hard to say "I love you"?
12. When is it appropriate to say "I love you"?
13. Why didn't the food taste right when she was upset?
-contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from Princeton; Danville, IL; South Coventry, TX; Fountain Valley, CO, Tampa, FL

Marcus Pfister, Milo and the Magical Stones

1. Did the mice die?
2. How did mice get on the island?
3. Where did the stones come from?
4. Why did the stones shine?
5. How did the stones multiply?
6. Tell which ending you liked best?
-contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from Dane County; Columbus, Ohio; Toronto, Ontario; Cochoran, CA, Virginia

Peggy Rathman, Ruby the Copycat

1. Why does she like copy catting so much?
2. Why did she want to copy cat?
3. How tall is she? How short? How skinny? How smart?
4. Why doesn't she like being herself?
5. Why is her name Ruby?
6. Why did she move to that place?
7. Why did she have to be in Miss Hart's class?
8. Why didn't she copy more than one person?
9. How much junk does she eat?
-contributed Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA children from K-5

George Shannon, A Bad Case of Stripes

1.What were all the colors she had on her?
2.Why didn't she want to tell the truth about lima beans?
3.What made her get that weird stripe disease?
4.Why was the old lady the only one who knew about the lima bean cure?
5.Why did she want to get cured when she could have been famous?
6.Why didn't she try lima beans first?
7.Why did she change so fast?
8.How did the news reporters hear about it?
- contributed by Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA children from K-5

and more questions George Shannon, A Bad Case of Stripes

9.Where did the stripes come from?
10.Why did she like lima beans so much?
11.What did she change?
12.What would happen if she ate carrots?
13.Did she have any friends at school?
14.Where did the old woman come from and where did she go?
15.Where the stripes contagious?
16. Why did she have 42 outfits?
- contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants

Chris Van Allsburg, Just a Dream

1. What did he want for his birthday before his dream?
2. Who did he tell about his dream?
3. Who gave him the tree?
4. How did Rose feel about his tree?
5. What made him have that dream?
-contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from New Jersey, Red Bank, Michigan; Worcester, MA

Ellen Stoll Walsh, Hop, Jump
1. What state are all the frogs from? Explain your answer
2. Where does Betsy go to school?
3. Why is she a blue frog?
4. What do you think her mom and dad are like?
5. How old do you think she is?
- contributed by 1998 YMCA Child Care Conference Participants from LaPorte Family YMCA, LaPorte, IN; Lake County YMCA, Painesville, Ohio; High Ridge, Chicago, IL; Hockomock Area YMCA, North Attleboro, MA

David Wisniewski, The Secret Knowledge of Grown-ups

1. How did the vegetables grow so big?
2. How big are the vegetables?
3. How do the vegetables communicate?
4. How do they have young?
5. What is the vegetable's food source?
6. Where do the vegetables go to shool?
7. Who and what is their leader?
8. What are they wanting to control?
9. Where do they live now?